

Agencies and other agricultural and water entities. Rex has been awarded numerous personal citations as well.

Madam Speaker, Rex leaves Ventura County's agricultural industry strong. I know my colleagues will join me in thanking him for his many years of dedicated service and in wishing him a long and fruitful retirement with his wife, Susan; and many years of enjoyment with their sons, Sean and Kevin; and their five grandchildren.

IN RECOGNITION OF JOHN
PLAYTER'S SERVICE AS A
WORLD WAR II VETERAN AND
POW

HON. ROY BLUNT

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. BLUNT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to honor and say thank you to a true American hero—and Missouri native. John Playter might not be a household name for many, but his service to our country during World War II certainly earns him a leading role in America's Greatest Generation.

Mr. Playter was called to duty in 1941 and served as an artillery officer before being taken prisoner with thousands of other U.S. servicemen after the fall of Bataan. His story of survival—through death marches and labor camps—in the Philippine jungles as an American soldier and a prisoner of war is extraordinary and nothing short of inspiring.

After more than two years in Japanese captivity, Mr. Playter regained his freedom only after the Japanese prisoner ship Shinyo Maru sank while transporting 730 Americans. Again defying the odds, John was one of only 83 survivors to be rescued by an American submarine.

When returning to Missouri, Mr. Playter met a young woman named Charlene at the O'Reilly General Hospital in Springfield where he recovered from injuries sustained during his captivity. John married Charlene and spent the next 38 years of his life with her at his side.

Staying true to his roots, Mr. Playter worked 25 years as the city engineer for the City of Bolivar. And, along the way, published his memoir, *Survivor*. His personal telling of this powerful story describes the service, faith and triumph of John and his brave colleagues.

The Bolivar Rotary Club will honor Mr. Playter for his service to his country, community and more than 50 years of service as a Rotarian this 4th of July when they name a three-acre park in his honor during their annual "Celebration of Freedom." John's life is an inspiration to everyone and one that deserves this long overdue honor. I'd like to publicly thank Mr. Playter for his dedicated service to his Nation and community.

CONGRATULATING JORGE URBINA,
RECIPIENT OF THE PEACE
CORPS FRANKLIN H. WILLIAMS
AWARD

HON. MICHAEL C. BURGESS

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. BURGESS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jorge Urbina on being awarded the Peace Corps Franklin H. Williams Award. This award celebrates the ongoing civic contributions of returned volunteers, and is intended to recognize the efforts of those who, like Mr. Urbina, have worked tirelessly to better their communities at home. Mr. Urbina will receive the award tonight, in a ceremony to be held here in Washington, D.C.

Mr. Urbina is currently the President of the Denton Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, a position he has held since 2001. His law practice, Urbina Law and Title, has consistently been committed to diversity in the workplace and involvement in the community. In recognition of his firm's outstanding work, Mr. Urbina was recently named the Small Business Administration's Minority Small Business Champion of the Year. In addition, Mr. Urbina is vice president of the Denton assistance center, a grassroots movement to build a common facility to house a collection of non-profit organizations in the area. He also recently resigned his position on the board of Interfaith Ministries of Denton, after serving for the maximum 12-year term. Mr. Urbina and his wife, Patty, have three children: David, age 21, Thomas, recently graduated from high school, and Susana, age 12.

Established in 1999, the Franklin H. Williams Award pays tribute to returned Peace Corps Volunteers of color who continue the Peace Corps mission through their commitment to community service, and who support the agency's third goal of promoting a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

I commend Mr. Urbina for the work of his outstanding legal practice, and also for his special involvement in the local community. The award he receives today is well deserved, and I am proud to represent him in the 26th District of Texas.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. STEVE KING

OF IOWA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. KING of Iowa. Madam Speaker, I was detained while attempting to reach the House floor to cast my vote on rollcall No. 415 on June 17, 2008. Had I been able to reach the floor before the vote was closed, I would have voted "yea."

H. CON. RES. 318, SUPPORTING THE
GOALS AND IDEALS OF THE
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SANI-
TATION

HON. BETTY McCOLLUM

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Ms. McCOLLUM of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Con. Res. 318, a resolution to support the goals and ideals of the International Year of Sanitation and to help raise awareness of the importance of sanitation and safe drinking water.

This resolution recognizes the importance of sanitation on public health, poverty reduction, economic and social development, and the environment. In 2000, the United States and other world leaders committed themselves to combat poverty, hunger, and disease through the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). One target is to halve the number of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015.

Today more than 1 billion people live without safe drinking water and an estimated 2.6 billion people worldwide go without proper sanitation. This lack of access contributes to the deaths of an estimated 1.5 million children each year. Clean water and sanitation are necessary to fight disease and reduce child and maternal mortality. Without it, more children will be sick, more children will forgo schooling, and more will lose their lives to disease.

The absence of basic water and sanitation services is particularly difficult for girls. In communities that lack these services, young girls often bear the burden of water collection leaving them little time or energy for school. Those who do make it to school find that only half all the world's schools have access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation—estimates show half the girls in Sub-Saharan Africa who drop out of primary school do so because of poor water and sanitation facilities. That is why investments in clean water and sanitation are essential to achieving universal education. A school sanitation program in Bangladesh helped increase the number of girls enrolling by 11 percent.

Expanding access to clean water and basic sanitation is one of our best strategies for improving the health and prosperity of entire communities and it is a necessary step toward achieving all of the MDGs. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of this resolution and to renew their commitment to improving access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation to help people live more productive and healthy lives.

TO SUPPORT THE GOALS OF THE
THIRD ANNUAL NATIONAL DUMP
THE PUMP DAY

HON. JAMES L. OBERSTAR

OF MINNESOTA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. OBERSTAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of an innovative approach to increasing use on our Nation's public transportation network. Today, June 19, Americans

across the country will “dump the pump” and ride public transportation as part of the Third Annual Dump the Pump Day. This important cause is sponsored by the American Public Transportation Association, APTA, and more than 100 public transportation systems will take part in “dump the pump” activities across the United States to encourage increased ridership on our Nation’s transit systems.

Activities for Dump the Pump day include having public events with drawings for free transit passes and other prizes, offering free or reduced rides, doing radio promotions, and providing “transit ambassadors” to help new riders.

As the price of gas has now surpassed \$4 a gallon, even more commuters are choosing to ride the train or the bus to work rather than drive alone in their cars. In the first quarter of 2008 commuters took more than 2.6 billion trips on trains, subways, light rail, and buses nationwide, an increase of 3.3 percent over the first quarter of 2007. Light rails saw the largest jump in ridership with a 10 percent increase to 110 million trips. Transit systems in metropolitan areas are reporting increases in ridership of 5, 10, and even 15 percent over last year’s figures. Some of the biggest increases in ridership are occurring in many areas in the South and West where new bus and light rail lines have been built in the last few years.

Recently, public transportation has experienced a renaissance in American cities and towns. In 2007, Americans took over 10.3 billion trips on public transportation, the highest level in 50 years. Public transportation use is up 32 percent since 1995, a figure that is more than double the growth rate of the population and is substantially over the growth rate for the vehicle miles traveled on our Nation’s highways for that same period. All around the country, voters continue to approve State and local ballot initiatives to support public transportation, even when it means local taxes will be raised or continued.

Despite these dramatic increases in usage, only 5 percent of workers nationally commute by public transit. Efforts to increase this statistic, such as Dump the Pump Day, are critical to assisting American commuters in making the switch to public transit in their daily commutes.

Another important goal of Dump the Pump Day is to reduce the United States dependence on foreign oil by encouraging more people to use public transportation. According to a recent study, if Americans used public transit at the same rate as Europeans—for roughly 10 percent of their daily travel needs—the United States could reduce its dependence on imported oil by more than 40 percent, nearly equal to the 550 million barrels of crude oil that we import from Saudi Arabia each year. When a solo commuter switches from a single occupancy vehicle to a transit commute, this single mode shift can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 20 pounds per day—more than 4,800 pounds in a year.

Public transportation use in all of its forms—bus, rail, vanpool, ferry, streetcar, and subway ridership to name a few—saves fuel, reduces emissions, and saves money. The direct petroleum savings attributable to current public transportation use in the United States is 1.4 billion gallons per year. When the secondary effects of transit availability on travel are also taken into account, the equivalent of 4.2 billion

gallons of gasoline is saved annually—more than 11 million gallons of gasoline per day.

This is why I have introduced H.R. 6052, the “Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act of 2008.” This bill provides much needed support to public transportation agencies and greater incentives for commuters to choose transit options, thereby reducing their transportation-related energy consumption and reliance on foreign oil. The Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act of 2008 authorizes funding for transit agencies nationwide that are temporarily reducing transit fares or expanding transit services to meet the needs of the growing number of transit commuters. H.R. 6052 also extends the Federal transit pass benefits program to require all Federal agencies in the United States to offer transit passes to Federal employees working in urbanized areas with fixed route transit systems nationwide.

Both increased use of public transportation and increased Federal investment in transit are crucial steps we must take to address skyrocketing gas prices, environmental degradation and gridlocked roadways across the Nation.

For these reasons and more, I support the Third Annual Dump the Pump Day to promote public transportation usage in the United States and help America break its addiction to foreign oil, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and free our highways from the crippling effects of congestion. I also urge my colleagues to join me in supporting H.R. 6052, the Saving Energy Through Public Transportation Act of 2008.

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS HOME RULE ACT OF 2008

HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON

OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Ms. NORTON. Madam Speaker, today, I am introducing the Public Charter Schools Home Rule Act of 2008, to give the District of Columbia local government full jurisdiction and complete oversight over the District of Columbia Charter School Board. I had hoped this normally routine local control would be possible when I was in the minority and worked with House Speaker Newt Gingrich and former Representative Steve Gunderson on the bill that created the District’s major charter school board. While the charter board bill itself was created on a home rule basis, the structure was not, and reflects a period before the recovery of the DC government from financial and managerial distress.

The DC Charter School Board is composed of members selected by the mayor, but only from a list of individuals presented by the Secretary of the Department of Education. Unlike similar boards in the District, the charter school board members need not be residents of the District of Columbia. Because the mayor is not permitted to select members of the board other than those submitted by the Secretary, the Federal Government inserts itself into critical decisionmaking about an important local education matter. This is an anti-home rule anomaly in a bill which had strong home rule support and is justifiably resented by DC public officials and residents.

Ironically, the charter school bill itself was drawn with an abundance of home rule officials and resident participation. The DC Charter School Board was established by Congress during a time when the District was in the midst of a serious financial crisis. The city’s local charter board, working under the DC Board of Education, had largely failed in its mandate to charter schools. Yet, it was clear that the District’s children needed an alternative to the local school system. I am grateful that my Republican congressional colleagues, who controlled Congress at the time, agreed that alternatives to DCPS could be created without going to private school vouchers, which DC residents and elected officials strongly opposed. Instead, a task force, created by Speaker Gingrich and led by former Representative Steve Gunderson, worked with officials, residents and me, on a home rule basis, to develop the bill. The task force held many sessions that members of the City Council, the School Board, DC education advocates, and residents who had a special interest in education attended. H.R. 3610 became the first Federal charter school bill. Shortly thereafter, a nationwide charter school bill that includes grant funding was enacted with broad bipartisan support.

I do not believe any of us could have anticipated the phenomenal growth and success of the DC Charter School Board or the level of innovations, diversity and excellence of many of the schools that has made it a model, and my bill is not intended as a criticism of the Charter School Board or its work. DC residents have created huge demand. The exponential growth of charter schools up to the largest number in the U.S. and their long waiting lists are a solid indication of the success of our charter schools in meeting the needs of thousands of students. The city would almost surely have lost many more residents than it has without the large growth of charters schools.

Mayor Adrian Fenty is restructuring and reforming the DC public school system and has dissolved the local charter school board, leaving the federally created charter school board as the only standing authority. However, a federally chartered board structure is at odds with these reforms. Only a structure developed by local, officials is appropriate, particularly for local education matters. This bill, therefore, does not create a structure or indicate the appointing authority. In our country that is a matter for local officials alone. I have insisted that this bill do no more than repeal all existing Federal jurisdiction and transfer that jurisdiction to the District of Columbia to write its own bill.

Only DC officials should appoint members to its local education board. The board cannot be appropriately accountable if its members are chosen from outside the accountable jurisdiction. I urge my colleagues to pass this important measure as soon as possible.

OFFERING GOOD LUCK AND A
SAFE RETURN TO GROTON’S
1109TH AVCRAD

HON. JOE COURTNEY

OF CONNECTICUT
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. COURTNEY. Madam Speaker, today, nearly 150 members of the 1109th Aviation